

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NICOSIA 0207

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (DIA ADDED AS INFORMATION ADDRESSEE)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR CY TU

SUBJ: ECEVIT VISIT TO CYPRUS

REF: A. NICOSIA 0017; B. NICOSIA 0044

1. SUMMARY: TURK CYPRIOT OFFICIALS ARE BEING UNUSUALLY CLOSE-MOUTHED ABOUT THE NON-PUBLIC ASPECTS OF FORMER TURKISH PREMIER, AND RPP LEADER, BULENT ECEVIT'S RECENT VISIT TO CYPRUS. OUR INITIAL IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, IS THAT ECEVIT WAS LESS INTRANSIGENT ON NEGOTIATIONS AND DEVOTED CONSIDERABLY MORE ATTENTION TO PURELY TURKISH COMMUNAL AFFAIRS DURING HIS PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS THAN IN HIS PUBLIC ADDRESSES. HE REPORTEDLY GAVE CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF SUPPORT TO DENKTASH. LOCAL OBSERVERS THINK VISIT WAS KEYED MORE TO TURKISH POLITICAL AUDIENCE THAN TO CYPRIOT PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. TURK CYPRIOT OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN UNUSUALLY SECRETIVE AND/OR
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UNAVAILABLE TO EMBOFFS SINCE THE DEPARTURE OF FORMER TURKISH

PRIME MINISTER, AND CURRENT RPP PRESIDENT, BULENT ECEVIT. FROM FEW WHO HAVE BEEN WILLING TO TALK (PARTICULARLY DENKTASH CONFIDENTANT VEDAT CHELIK), WE GATHER THAT ECEVIT WAS LESS INTRANSIGENT RE RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS THAN HE WAS IN PUBLIC SPEECHES. SPECIFICALLY, ECEVIT MADE CLEAR THAT MOVEMENT OF SOUTHERN TURK CYPRIOTS WAS NOT PRECONDITION TO SUBSTANTIVE NEGOTIATIONS.

3. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH TURK CYPRIOT PARLIAMENTARIANS AND LEADERS OF SEMI-OFFICIAL ORGANIZATIONS, ECEVIT REPORTEDLY URGED DENKTASH OPPONENTS TO POSTPONE EFFORTS TO REFORM THE AUTONOMOUS TURKISH ADMINISTRATION (ATA), ARGUING IT PREMATURE DO THIS BEFORE BASIC GRECO-TURKISH ACCORD REACHED ON FUTURE SHAPE OF CYPRUS GOVERNMENT. HE GAVE IMPRESSION THAT HE EXPECTED GENERAL AGREEMENT SOON, CERTAINLY BEFORE SUMMER.

4. HE TOLD PARLIAMENTARIANS TO CLOSE RANKS BEHIND DENKTASH, URGING THAT DISSENT, IF NECESSARY, BE CONSTRUCTIVE. HE GAVE DENKTASH'S OPPONENTS NO INDICATION THAT THEY WOULD HAVE A FRIEND IN ANKARA WHEN RPP RETURNS TO POWER. AS OTHER RPP LEADERS HAD DONE PREVIOUSLY, ECEVIT DISCOURAGED THE FORMATION OF A LOCAL REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY. ECEVIT REPORTEDLY TOLD ATA OFFICIALS THAT HE FOUND THE TURK CYPRIOT PARLIAMENTARIANS TO BE A DISORGANIZED, FRACTIOUS LOT.

5. ACCORDING TO LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO ACCOMPANIED HIM, ECEVIT WAS SHOCKED AT DISARRAY IN TURKISH CYPRIOT ECONOMY. SPEAKING TO SMALL GATHERINGS, HE REPEATEDLY URGED WORKERS AND PEASANTS TO DEVELOP THE LANDS GIVEN THEM BY THE ARMY. HE WAS CRITICAL OF INEFFECTIVE EFFORTS BY ATA AND TURKISH MAINLAND BUREAUCRATS TO REACTIVATE ECONOMY OF NORTHERN CYPRUS.

6. MOST TURKISH CYPRIOT OFFICIALS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN FEEL THAT ECEVIT'S SPEECHES WERE DIRECTED MORE TOWARDS THE TURKISH PUBLIC THAN HIS ISLAND AUDIENCES. IN THEIR VIEW, ECEVIT WAS TRYING TO EMPHASIZE HIS ROLE AS THE "LIBERATOR" OF CYPRUS AND STRESSING HIS MILITANT NATIONALISM IN ANTICIPATION OF EARLY ELECTIONS. THEY THOUGHT IT EASIER FOR ECEVIT TO MAKE ELECTORIAL POINTS ON CYPRUS ISSUE WHILE OUT OF OFFICE (AND THUS WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY) THAN WHEN HE WAS PRIME MINISTER. THEY PREDICTED ECEVIT WOULD PROVE FAR MORE DIPLOMATIC WHEN BACK IN OFFICE.

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7. COMMENT: WHILE CONCLUSIONS DRAWN BY LOCAL OBSERVERS PROBABLY ACCURATE, INTRANSIGENCE DEMONSTRATED BY ECEVIT HERE WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR IRMAK GOVERNMENT TO COMPROMISE ON CYPRIOT ISSUE. THIS WILL BE PARTICULARLY TRUE IF IRMAK AND ESENBEL SEEK TO PRESSURE DENKTASH TO MAKE COMPROMISES HE OPPOSES. DENKTASH'S OVER-IDENTIFICATION WITH RPP LEADER COULD HURT VICE PRESIDENT IF NEXT MAINLAND ELECTION FAILS RETURN ECEVIT TO POWER.

8. GREEK CYPRIOTS, INURED TO CONCEPT OF ECEVIT AS DEVIL INCARNATE,
FOUND HIS PERFORMANCE ON ISLAND CONSISTENT WITH THEIR PREJUDICES.
ALL GREEK LANGUAGE PAPERS FULMINATED OVER ECEVIT'S SPEECHES;
OFFICIALS APPEARED GENUINELY SHAKEN BY HIS PUBLIC INTRANSIGENCE.
BROWN

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